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WAR A DISCIPLINE.

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN

CALVARY CHURCH,

SAN FRANCISCO,

ON

THANKSGIVING DAY, NOVEMBER 24 1864.

By CHAS. WADSWORTH,
PASTOR.

Published by Request.

SAN FRANCISCO:
H. H. BANCROFT & COMPANY.
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Turnbull & Smith, Printers, 612 Commercial Street.

CORRESPONDENCE.

San Francisco, Nov. 25th, 1864.

Rev. Chas. Wadsworth, D. D.

Rev. and Dear Sir,—Having listened with great pleasure to your discourse on the occasion of our National Thanksgiving, Nov. 24, 1864, and believing that the wide diffusion of the truth therein, will do much good, we earnestly solicit the same for publication.

Yours, very truly,

H. P. COON.
H. H. HAIGHT.
THOS. H. SELBY.
CHAS. CLAYTON.
E. B. BABBITT.
H. M. NEWHALL.
JAS. D. ROBERTS.

Gentlemen :

In compliance with your request, and deferring to your judgment of any possible good its publication may subserve, I herewith inclose this imperfect sermon. I need not say that it is a mere handful of fragments ; a brief hour's discursion on so broad a field of thought could not well be more. As such, the manuscript is submitted to your disposal.

With every consideration of respect and esteem,

I remain, very sincerely,

Your friend and servant,

CHARLES WADSWORTH.

To the

Hon. H. P. Coon, and others.

SERMON.

"Every Branch that beareth Fruit, He purgeth it that it may bring forth more Fruit."—John xv: 2.

The text is metaphorical of husbandry. It describes the process whereby the fruit of a vineyard is improved and increased. It is appropriate to this occasion, because these annual thanksgivings were originally designed, and should always serve, to quicken our gratitude to Almighty God for the ripened fruits of the earth. They answer, in our religious life, to the Feast of Harvest, under the old dispensation. And such festivals are befitting and beautiful. They were so, pre-eminently, in regard of the Jews, because, as a nation, they were farmers. Peasant and prince, in their respective spheres, were alike husbandmen. While a small portion of the tribes on the eastern side of the Jordan led a purely pastoral life, the great body of the people were emphatically tillers of the soil. Their peculiar civil polity was intended to make them such. Not only did each tribe possess a particular province, but each family had, as well, a specific inheritance which could never be wholly alienated. No great land holding aristocracy, therefore, could obtain permanently among them. The poorest Jew held his freehold by irrevocable title. If, for a time, haply or wilfully alienated, it reverted unincumbered to him or his at the year of Jubilee; and every husbandman felt that all improvement of the estate was for the benefit of himself and his children.

Under this peculiar encouragement to labor, the whole land attained the highest agricultural condition. Naturally exceedingly fertile, it became, through culture, the garden of the world.

The peculiar productions of all zones were found in its widely diversified soil and climate ; grains of all species grew on its sunny plains ; plantations of olives covered its sandy hills ; its low, clay soils nourished groves of stately palm ; its sharp mountain ridges were purple with rich clusters of the vine ; even its precipitous rocks were made fertile by means of artificial embankments, so that, in the autumn time, corn-fields and vineyards and orange groves and forests rose, in ascending circles, from valley to hill-top, covering the whole landscape with a lavish beauty, until the old Canaan, in its loveliness, seemed a fitting type of heaven. And to such a people the Feast of Harvest was, of course, a glorious festival. Its annual return woke the whole land into gladness. Fair and befitting were the exulting rites of that old holiday, when, from every hamlet and home, from glens of the vine and the olive, and valleys golden with corn, the thousands of Israel went up to appear before God in Zion, filling the land, as they passed, with those old choral harmonies :—" *Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem ; praise thy God, O Zion. For He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates ; He hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat ; He hath not dealt so with any nation. Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary. Praise Him in the firmament of His power. Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet. Praise Him with the timbrel and dance ; kings of the earth and all people, princes and all judges of the earth ; both young men and maidens, old men and children. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.*"

Nor even in this aspect, as simple harvest festivals, do these annual Thanksgivings beseem us less than the Jews. We that live in cities sometimes forget this. We think of agricultural fairs and harvest-homes as things especially appropriate in rural districts ; while in the progress of the arts, and manufactures, and commerce, we feel a deeper interest. But we should remember that even these have their springs in, and depend upon, husbandry. Suspend, for a single twelvemonth, the world's practical agriculture and it would become a great sepulchre. Therefore, the sailor on the sea, the artizan in his shop, the merchant on exchange, the orator on the platform, the statesman in the cabinet, the noble in the palace, the king upon the throne are all as deeply and personally interested in husbandry, and should be as thankful for its success, as the humblest tiller of the soil.

Such feasts of harvest, therefore, become all men ; and not least of all, Californians. First, manifestly, among our occasions of praise are our agricultural blessings. California has a thousand things to be thankful for. In regard of manifold interests, a bright and boundless future lies before her.

Her *mines* are inexhaustible. The whole land shows like a cabinet which the great Father has stored for the delight of his children. Yea, like a treasure vault, whose riches might suffice for the traffic of the world. Verily, in comparison with other lands, is the old prophecy fulfilled :—"*For brass God hath given us gold ; and for iron, silver ; and for wood, brass ; and for stones, iron.*" California may well be thankful for her treasures of the earth.

She may be thankful, too, for her *commerce.* Already, she is the most important commercial State of the North Pacific ; and this relative position she must maintain, for she can have no rival. So that, in that hastening time, when her population shall have marvellously increased ; and, the cost of labor being cheapened, her cañons and cities shall hum with the wheels and spindles of her own manufactures, and her vast mineral wealth be economically and thoroughly developed ; and more than all, when the immense products of the East shall flow through her Golden Gate, as the navies of the Pacific pour their treasures at her feet, and a thousand rushing chariots, along pathways of iron, bear through her Sierran passes all this measureless traffic ; then the commerce of California will be the grandest in the world. Over her mineral and her commercial resources, may our fair State well keep thanksgiving.

And yet, second to nothing, should be her glory in her agricultural promise. Her harvest will, in the end, be of more value than her mines. Soil, atmosphere, climate—each a marvel in itself—combine, in this behalf, almost unto miracle. They have already rendered her vegetation the wonder of the world—for here are clusters heavier than Eschol's, and fruits more abundant than Arcadia's, and flowers more wonderfully fair than Pæstum's or Sharon's. And when, in her swift progress, she shall have come to that period of repose and culture, when wealth sinks from its importance as an end, to be reckoned only for its uses, and her merchant princes shall delight to beautify her glorious scenery—building amid gardens like Eden, palaces

to enshrine her new types of art, and embosom her new social life —then, in that long, fair, pastoral holiday, will her simple landscape scenery, and agricultural wealth render her, most of all, the world's envy. And it shall come to pass, if not in your day, yet in the days of your children, that the grand old harvest feast of Judea will be fully rivalled here, and your loudest songs, like her's, be these autumnal thanksgivings for the divine love that crowns the year with radiant blossoms and ripened fruits of the earth. It is eminently proper, then, to observe these anniversaries in the spirit which originated them—public gratitude unto God at the ingathering of the land's ripened harvests.

Meanwhile, in each succeeding year, these Thanksgiving Days have, by common consent, assumed, more and more, the character of national thanksgivings for great national blessings—seasons in which the preacher in the sanctuary is expected to discourse especially on our civil and national reasons for praise. And as appropriate in both respects we have chosen our text. It befits a simple harvest festival, for it is metaphorical of husbandry. It befits our civil and national condition, as a stricken and suffering nation ; because, under this figure of a pruning-knife, it presents even national sufferings in merciful aspects, and reveals God's hidden meaning of love in these phenomena of disturbance.

Now, we need not say that to the world this day, our country presents almost only aspects of disaster. The vision is just that upon which the great statesman of New England prayed that his eyes might never look :—" A sun shining on the broken fragments of our once glorious Union—States dissevered, discordant, belligerent—a land rent with civil feuds and drenched with fratricidal blood." We are observing our National Festival in conditions which, some men think, call for a national fast, as a more seemly service ; and our praises will ascend largely from desolate households and sorrowing hearts. Nevertheless, a thoughtful christian will find, even in our present circumstances, abundant occasion of praise. Though suffering many things, yet many blessings remain to us. Our national aspects might be much worse than they are. Surely it is a matter of praise before God, that, through the length and breadth of our land, the cities are not smouldering ruins, and the fields red with blood ! Even this thought were enough to inspire our thanksgivings. But my text gives us another and a better ; for it teaches us to regard even our disast-

ers as merciful, and to find occasion of praise, even, in the seeming judgments of God.

The text speaks of *the benefits of a pruning-knife*!—of processes of cutting, with a purpose of good! And such, it is the privilege of faith to believe, are the afflictions we are experiencing; we are to regard this sword of war as but the divine pruning-knife, purging unto greater faithfulness a grand vine of God's planting. Of course, we are not thinking to speak of war as, self-considered, a blessing. Oh no! God forbid! For according to all the teachings of His word it is evil, and evil only. Nevertheless, in all the histories of God's dealings with nations, war is the very evil by which He hath wrought out their good.

Sure we are, God permits it, overrules it, manages it for His own glory. We may find fault with it, abhor it, anathematize it, pray against it; yet, as believers in a divine Providence, we must accept it as a divine dispensation toward us—either purely a judgment—or a judgment meant mercifully—*i. e.*—either *an axe at the root of an evil tree to be cut down*—or a *pruning-knife amid overgrown branches, that there may be increase of the fruit.*

But there is no man here prepared to regard these disasters as positively destructive. Surely, God hath not yet laid his devouring axe at the root of the tree! We are afflicted indeed; we are in straits; and the nations of the earth laugh us to scorn; as if the divine Feller had gone forth against our glorious tree, whose leaves were fair, and whose fruit much, and whose branches gave promise unto children's children, and unto the children of strangers, of a blessed shelter to the end of time; of this goodly tree, declaring:—"*Behold I will hew it down, and cut off its branches, and shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit; therefore, let the beasts get away from under it, and the birds from its branches.*"

But *we* do not believe this. This American tree—this grand growth of God's mountains of love—is not yet to be cut down. No great nation ever perished in its youth, or on the threshold of its progress. And we shall not thus perish. Indeed this tree is not evil that God's axe should fell it. We are sick of this priestly and pharisaic cant about the supreme wickedness of this nation. The history of the American people, up to the hour of this fearful visitation, was the purest national history the world ever read. No pages, elsewhere, are so illustrated with the great

popular virtues of benevolence, patriotism, philanthropy, and practical godliness! Surely we are not especially obnoxious to divine wrath; if God has borne so long with earth's old monstrous despotisms, He will bear yet a little with us! And therefore, we judge confidently that our emblem this day is not a great tree, which, having been long cultured, and bringing forth no fruit, or fruit only evil, is reserved for the destroying axe; but is, rather, a fruitful vine that, in the very lustiness of its growth, needs the pruning-knife, which cuts, not for destruction, but for the sake of the fruit.

Now, this thought we will pursue through the remainder of our discourse—that these afflictions are designed for our good—*that this war is not God's destroying axe, but His beneficent pruning-knife.* For surely this is conceivable. We all understand how, in the workings of divine providence, there is often a great blessing even in a curse—as from the primitive curse of *labor* sprang the great blessing *industry*—and through *death*, the great evil, did Christ accomplish *redemption*, our infinite good! And thus, in regard of this scourge—war. There are principles of human nature, developed by long continued material and commercial prosperity, more to be feared than those which arm and inspire men for patriotic battle; and as we look carefully to our national character, we shall discover many great and growing evils which this sore chastisement will destroy or modify—overgrown branches of the American vine that needed God's pruning-knife. Let us consider a few of them. And

First—*Covetousness*—that foul lust of Mammon which even Jehovah ranks with the master-sin, idolatry. Verily, here was an evil thing in the midst of us. Up to the time of this visitation, we were fast becoming the most mercenary people on earth. So intensely material had become our civilization that we were tempted to say that even the old chivalrous and sentimental barbarism were better. In the absence of a feudal aristocracy of birth and blood, we were inaugurating that worst of all social castes—an aristocracy of riches. Craft, shrewdness, subtlety, cunning, anything, everything, mighty in money making, had become grounds of claim for patents of nobility. Gold was fast becoming our great national idol. Gold controlled our franchises, elected our rulers, shaped our politics, colored our religion. Proverbially

unto the world, and consciously unto ourselves, we were fast sinking into the unleavened sordidness of avarice; and this insane greed of gain was working our ruin; for by an immutable law of life, wealth begets luxury, and luxury palsies the strength and digs the grave of nations.

Now I need not pause to show philosophically and historically how war is naturally, and hath ever practically proved itself, the antagonist of covetousness. Not only does it destroy the idol, by consuming its substance, but it destroys the idolatry, by calling into play higher social instincts—the craft, the subtlety, the sordidness of unscrupulous avarice giving place to the self-denial, the self-sacrifice, the chivalrous daring of patriotism and soldiership; and thus, evil as it is, it is yet the smaller of two evils. Better a thousand times the wild torrent from the mountains, sweeping away the corn and vines of the thrifty husbandman, than the stagnant morass breeding deadly malaria! Even these blasts of war quicken some of our better impulses. We feel now that life has nobler aims than to build fine houses, and drive fast horses, and beautify large estates, and leave much wealth unto children—that courage, and manliness, and patriotism, and the preservation of a strong national life, and the compelled respect and homage of the world are of more worth than all the prizes grasped by the withered hand of avarice! The result, at least, is certain. Our golden god is being fast crushed under the iron chariot of conflict—the dust of our molten calf is making life's waters bitter. Our vine was wasting its vigor in an overgrown branch of covetousness; and Jehovah is pruning it with His terrible knife—War!

Secondly—*Lawlessness*—a wide-spread, popular independence of, or restlessness under, wholesome restraint, was another of our fast growing evils. Our liberty, through its very greatness, was fast becoming license. Many of our laws lay dead letters in the statute book. Property and life, in our midst, were fearfully insecure. Even family government—the great source of all civil restraint—was fast disappearing, under the practical working of the Young-American theory of exclusive self-government. To the philosophic statesmen of Europe our free institutions seemed tending to anarchy. There appeared in our body-politic no resistless central power, to control and conserve. Hence arose, not unnaturally, in our midst this grand heresy of State sovereignties—

the lawlessness of the individual man becoming the lawlessness of the masses—the selfish individualism of the old colonial and confederate eras, transmitted as hereditary virus, to disorder the functions of the new constitutional life. It has disordered it from the first. This war is to be regarded scarcely as a new thing. We were not at peace before. For the last fifty years the condition of these States has been a mighty composite antagonism—a seething caldron wherein mingled all elements of hot strife. Witness our national legislature; our national elections! What scenes like the barbaric conflict of armed champions in our national capitol? What excitements like the mingling tides of armed battle in the exercise of our franchises! What tearful questionings of our political future at home! What exulting prophecies abroad of our hastening destruction! And do you think to call all this a condition of *peace*? Alas, no! It was at best but an armistice—the peace only of a millennium wherein the lamb's heart was chill with terror, and the recumbent lion was but crouching for his spring! This war is not the creation of our day nor of our generation. It is but the development of latent elements, mighty from the first. It was, even then, a war of hot breath, of angry words, of wrestling opinions—the strife of fierce and untamed spirits!—the scattering, in our fair heritage, of the fabled dragon's teeth, of which these bristling bayonets of armed men are but the natural harvest.

I repeat it. *Impatience of restraint* has been our great national evil. It grew with our ever-growing idolatry of popular sovereignty, and culminated in this inevitable heresy of State sovereignty. For a heresy it is; its absurdity is apparent in its simple statement. The very word "Constitution" implies the vital connexion of parts in the same body—the condition or laws of one individual, indivisible, organic life. If therefore, our Federal Union be no more than a conglomerate of States, rounded by outward pressure and cemented by selfish interests, then it never had a constitution, nor has it any thing to glory in; for the "Six Nations of Indians" confederated for purposes of mutual defence, and roaming in lawless savageness their native wilds, were as truly and nobly a "North American Republic," three hundred years ago.

Surely this theory of government was false; and its inevitable

result was sharp sectional antagonism. For what, as thus considered, was our nationality? A *constellation* of States, held omnipotently together by a supreme central law, and revolving in beneficent harmony through the firmament of heaven? No, indeed. It was only a KENNEL of States, hunting their prey together through a wild jungle of compromises, ready to part at a moment, if their paths separated, or to spring madly at each other's throats, if those paths crossed! And why should not our national legislature be a scene of barbaric strife, and the exercise of our national franchises convulse the whole land!

This unconstitutional lawlessness was a terrible evil; and the natural result—yea, the positive and grand design of this war is forever to remove it. In its origin in the popular American mind and heart it had no meaner, no other end. It was not a war for pride, for passion, for gain, for conquest, for selfish interests, for personal ambition, for the jealousies of States, or the rivalries of regions. Oh no! It was a war simply for constitutional life—constitutional government—for the enthronement of national law—one resistless, controlling, central power—one great, sympathizing, supreme popular heart, sending through the whole body-politic the tides of a common healthful life! This was at least its aim, and if it accomplish anything, this must be its end. For, whatever else we may lose in this fiery trial, if we come forth with a national life at all, it will be with a common, mighty, constitutional life—a government not only the freest and fairest, but the most immutable and irresistible the world ever saw. Thereafter forever, will LAW, as a tremendous and inexorable power, be enthroned in the midst of us; and we shall be law-abiding and blest. Our vine of Liberty was shooting forth a monstrous branch of license, and Jehovah is pruning it with his fearful knife—WAR!

THIRDLY—*Political Atheism* was another, and the most terrible of our fast growing evils. Under the specious plea of separating Church and State, we were attempting a practical divorce of God and our Government. We were not merely irreligious; we had become infidel; we were fast becoming atheist. The divine law was not recognized in our high places of authority; the divine favor was scarcely regarded among our elements of prosperity. Nay, so positively idolatrous had become our trust in our wonderful nationality that we regarded it not only independent of divine

purposes, but indispensable to them :—"Where" cried the infidel, "shall God raise up an instrument to destroy us?"—"How" cried the believer, "shall God evangelize the nations without us?"

And this political atheism which has destroyed so many nations, and will destroy any nation, was growing on our fair national vine like a monstrous fungus; it was eating out its strength and destroying all its fruit. And by this war God is pruning it. We are learning, we have learned, once for all, and thoroughly, that our national salvation depends neither upon political sagacity, nor military strength, but solely on the protection of that great Arm that ruleth in Zion; that, indeed, all those material resources and social influences, we regarded as our strength, are, without the divine blessing, only so many elements of disaster; that all these bonds of national union, we had pronounced indissoluble, this grand geographical unity, this intimate association of our broad industrial and commercial interests, this prouder partnership in our land's blessed memories and glorious hopes; yea, even that tenderer brotherhood of kith and kin, rocked in the same cradle, nourished in the some household; that all these, and whatsoever else had seemed as bands of triple steel round our beloved confederacy are but as a spider's web, when an incensed God turns away from us the light of His countenance. God is teaching us, not merely lessons of political wisdom, but, as well, great ethical and theological lessons, and he will bring us forth from the trial, as gold purified by the fire; not the old, boastful unbelieving nationality, but a reverent and christian people whose God is the Lord! Our vine was shooting forth rank branches of atheism and Jehovah is pruning it with his sharp knife—War!

Now, time would fail me to pursue this thought further. There are manifold other evils from which this war will deliver us; but, inasmuch as they are either smaller or sectional, and obvious to every thoughtful man, we need not consider them. Indeed, we have brief space left for the remainder of our subject. Thus far, we have considered only the text's *negative* aspects—*the evil growths of which the divine Husbandman is pruning us.* But the text has a *positive*, and not less important aspect—*the improved fruit which, with pruning, the great vine will produce* Of these overgrown branches "He purgeth it, *that it may bring forth more fruit.*"

Glancing, then, hastily at some of the positive results this fearful war promises, we mention,

First—*A nobler style and type of manhood.*

This is indeed implied in what we have said of the qualities of character this conflict is developing. In this regard, the American vine bore precious fruit from the first. History has no nobler page than our old colonial record—no story of truer heroism, of character better fitted by lofty qualities to do man's noblest work. Verily, God gathered out of christendom the choicest specimens of the race to plant in this western husbandry. Yet it was but the old manhood after all. Every colonist remained still a part of his ancestral nationality. We were still distinct races ; each with its own father-land of grand hopes and memories. We were a conglomerate of all peoples and not composite Americans. But even this we are now becoming. Fighting together for the same great ends, bearing each other's burdens, binding up each other's wounds, struggling and suffering together unto death, mingling tears and blood in one common conflict for a common home and heritage unto children's children, we are fast becoming one people, with all our noblest affections rooted in the same common land of precious memories and glorious hopes. Through this sore fellowship of suffering we shall be hereafter a composite. And a priceless composite it will be—like the celebrated Corinthian brass, an amalgam of all metals—when the best qualities of the iron Saxon, the volatile Frenchman, the grave Spaniard, the reflective German, the effervescing Italian, and the warm-hearted Irishman shall be harmoniously blended in one type of American manhood.

And doing this, as this fierce conflict is, and meanwhile, as we have seen, calling into play all our higher social instincts—instead of the greed, the craft, the sordid selfishness of avarice, substituting the self-denial, the self-sacrifice, the lofty aims and ambition, the chivalrous daring of patriotism and soldiership—doing all this and more—it is evidently developing a style and strength of American manhood, full of all noble and heroic impulses, worthy of our ancestry and traditions, in whose reckonings the accumulations of industry, the gains of commerce, the ends and aims of mean and selfish ambition ; yea, all life's smaller and lowlier things, yea, life itself, our own life, our children's life, will seem only as the dust of

the desert, when the stake of the mighty game is a great imperial and christian nationality. Surely, in this respect, will God's pruned vine bring forth nobler fruit !

Secondly—*It will bring forth a new style and type of civil freedom.*

It is a popular mistake to regard liberty as one absolute and immutable thing. There are as many ideas and forms of liberty as of religion. There was the old patriarchal liberty and the old theocratic liberty, and the fierce old Grecian and the stern old feudal liberty. There is to-day, the old English liberty, and the French liberty, and the Swiss liberty, and the Central and South American liberty. And in this direction there has ever been progress. After centuries of struggling with imperial despotisms, the race achieved for itself the grand old feudal liberty—a noble composite of historic growth—the equilibrium of immense and antagonistic social forces—the harmony of compromise and counterpoise amid the mingling and mighty elements of state—a limited monarchy, a limited oligarchy, a limited democracy, all mutually modifying and moulding each other into grand forms of free social life. And this perhaps, till now, has philosophic statesmanship regarded as the freest possible social system consistent with strong government ; and therefore as the last and best form of popular civil liberty. The fair old Grecian dream of true equality and fraternity, a condition of liberty without feudal antagonisms, a government truly representative, republican—*i. e.—absolute self-government* —seemed in theory beautiful, but practically absurd. It might obtain for a time. It might work wonders for a brief season, and upon a narrow field, and amid serene pastoral holidays, but would surely be resolved into anarchy by the first wild ministry of conflict and storm. And therefore, in the opinions of wise men this new form of American liberty seemed destined to perish. European Sanballets mocked it with the old sneer :—" Wherefore do these men build ? Verily if a fox go up he will break down their stone wall." Nor had our American Nehemiahs much of the old prophetic hopefulness. From the last days of Washington, unto the days remembered by our children did that noble race of statesmen (alas they have passed away and left no succession !) lift up voices in solemn warning, enduring unto the end the taunt of

being "alarmists," and "union savers," just because they perceived that the very greatness of our liberty was its most terrible attribute, and believed that such storms of civil strife as the old, staunch, kingly ships of state could weather, would drive our fairer but frailer bark hopelessly into shipwreck. Yes, and they died, every one of them, though in the fulness of their fame, yet with eyes dim and souls darkened in the shadow of evil things seemingly coming on their children.

Indeed, for half a century, the great American heart has beaten intermittingly and convulsed under this dread incubus of Disunion. Men have felt, if they did not confess, the fear that the holy and beautiful house of our fathers, wherein are treasured all our blessed memories, and cradled all our glorious hopes, was built of brick piled without mortar, which the first throe of civil strife would rock hopelessly into ruin; that though this self-government might serve our purpose in times of peace, and even lead us in triumph against all foreign aggression, yet it would be blown hopelessly into anarchy by the first fierce breath of a great civil convulsion.

But how seems this thing now? Why, we are this very hour governing ourselves even better than before, positively more scrupulously law-abiding, more observant of all ordinances guarding property and life; and this over a breadth of territory which no feudal despotism could control; and in the face, yea, amid the very throes of the most terrible civil convulsion the world ever saw. Verily, the exhibition we have just made of our matchless franchises—calmly electing our Chief Magistrate amid the excitements of a war like this—with all our cabals and factions, and unprincipled appeals and malignant attacks upon character, and the selfish ambition of leaders, and the roused passions of the masses, with our great cities filled with a reckless populace, and the land swarming with armed men; and yet, the whole agitated nation, as quietly as before appealing and submitting to the decision of the ballot-box—this, I say, proves that an intelligent self-government is possible in any and all popular conditions, and is positively the strongest and most steadfast of all governments; that men born and bred with the most extravagant notions of civil freedom, are not driven into anarchy, but only compacted and consolidated by great civil pressure; that they will restrain themselves, tax themselves, conscript themselves, yea, to the last farth-

ing and drop of blood sacrifice themselves, yielding implicitly to that invisible thing—Law, moving, each in his own sphere, and achieving his own task, scrupulously observing all civil ordinances and social customs, amid elements of convulsion that would have shaken into fragments the mightiest feudal despotism on the face of the earth !

We say then, this war is developing the last grand type of free government. It is dispelling all doubts as to its possibility and permanence. It is proving that the fair old Grecian liberty was not a distempered dream, but a divine type, yea, prophecy of the popular, civil perfection to which, in the latter day glory, christian manhood shall attain. Surely then, in this regard also, will God's war-pruned vine bring forth precious fruit.

Thirdly—*It will bring forth a new style of christianity.*

After what has been already said you will not mis-understand me to speak of war as, self-considered, favorable to christianity. On the contrary, we hold it to be a thing, evil, barbarous, brutal, infernal, between which, and the spirit of the Gospel of Christ, there can be only antagonism. Nevertheless, it is under this self-same law of antagonisms that God works out often His grandest purposes. And in this way only, do I speak of this war as developing christianity. At first, indeed, this seemed impossible. We all heard, and felt, and blushed at the infidel clamor, that, if the nation on earth most thoroughly christianized, could thus be convulsed with civil strife, henceforth, the gospel must be reckoned a failure. Yes, and the gloomiest fear, at first, of the christian patriot was, like Eli's not for his country, nor for his kindred, but for the ark of his God. Nevertheless, we can now perceive how even christianity will be shorn of no glory, but rather illustrated and magnified as it passes through this conflict. This illustration is manifold,

1st—*In the christian character so frequently displayed in a patriotic soldiery.*

From the wars of Abraham, and Moses, and David, history has nothing to match with it ; and we venture to predict that, when this conflict is ended, the biographies of these christian men dying for their country will furnish the richest and most wonderful religious literature the church ever possessed. My limits forbid an

enlarged illustration of this thought. I can only read, in this connexion, some paragraphs of a letter written on the eve of a great battle, as a specimen of thousands which God's grace inspired, and will not suffer to perish. It was addressed by Major Sullivan Ballou, of the Second Rhode Island Regiment, to his wife, the night before his departure for Manassas, where, on the following week he was killed.

"Camp Clark, Washington, July 14, 1861.

"My Very Dear Sarah:—The indications are that we shall move very soon, perhaps to-morrow. Lest I should not be able to write to you again, I feel impelled now to write a few lines that may fall under your eyes when I shall be no more. Our movement may be one of a few days duration and full of pleasure, and it may be one of sorrow, conflict and death to me. "Lord not my will but thine be done." If it is necessary that I should fall on the battle field for my country, I am ready. I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American civilization now leans on the triumph of the Government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us, through the blood and suffering of the Revolution, and I am willing —perfectly willing—to lay down all my joys in this life to help to maintain this Government and pay that debt. But, my dear wife, when I know that with my own joys I lay down nearly all of yours, and replace them in this life with cares and sorrows; when, after having eaten, for long years, the bitter fruits of orphanage myself, I must offer it as the only sustenance to my dear little children, is it weak or dishonorable that, while the banner of my purpose floats calmly and proudly in the breeze, underneath my unbounded love for you, my darling wife and children, should struggle in fierce though useless contest with my love of country? I cannot describe to you my feelings on this calm, summer, sabbath night, when thousands of men are sleeping around me, many of them no doubt enjoying the last sleep before that of death, while I am awed by the feeling that death is creeping around me with his fatal dart, as I sit communing with my God, my country and thee. I have sought, most closely and diligently and often, in my heart for a wrong motive in thus hazarding the happiness of all those I love, and I could find none. A pure love of country, and of those principles which I have so often advocated before the people,—another name of honor that I love more than I fear death, has called upon me, and I have obeyed.

"Sarah, my love for you is deathless; it seems to bind me with mighty cables, that nothing but omnipotence could break; and yet my love of country comes over me like a strong wind, and bears me irresistibly on, with all those claims, to the battle field. The memory of all the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most grateful to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long. And how hard it is for me to give them up, and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and seen our sons grow up to honorable man-

hood around us. I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me—perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar—that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I loved you; and when my last breath escapes me on the battle field, it will whisper your name. Forgive my many faults and the many pains I have caused you. How foolish, how thoughtless, I have oftentimes been. How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness, and struggle with all the misfortunes of this world to shield you and our children from harm, but I cannot. I must watch you from the spirit land, and hover near you while you buffet the storms with your precious freight, and wait with patience till we meet to part no more. But, oh! Sarah, if the dead can come back to this earth, and flit unseen around those they love, I shall always be near you; in the gladdest day, in the darkest night; amidst your happiest scenes and your gloomiest hours, *always—always*; and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath; or if the cool air fans your throbbing temples, it shall be my spirit passing by. Sarah, do not mourn me dead, but think I am gone and waiting for thee—for we shall meet again. As for my little boys, they will grow up as I have done, and never know a father's love or care. Little Willie is too young to remember me long; and my blue-eyed Edgar will keep my frolics with him among the dim memories of his childhood. Sarah, I have unlimited confidence in your maternal care, and your development of their characters, and I feel that God will bless you in your holy work. Tell my two mothers that I call God's blessing upon them. Oh, Sarah, come to me, and lead thither my two children.

My wife, farewell,

SULLIVAN."

I will not trust myself to read more of these letters. The whole land is full of them. They are preserved as precious memorials, not of human love merely, but of love sanctified by God's grace; and when the christian soldiership they illustrate shall be embalmed in the richest biographies of earth, then will the history of this conflict be glorified by them, and the very gospel of peace and love be magnified in them! Surely the dying song of old martyrdom went up to heaven from dungeon and stake no more triumphantly eloquent of that gospel's blessed power than the farewell and dying words of such christian patriots! Meanwhile the gospel is magnified,

2ndly—*In the christian spirit which this war is developing, in new agencies of benevolence!*

Here too, my limits forbid more than a single illustration. Take this "Christian Commission," in whose behalf you are asked this day to contribute—a miraculous creation surely of practical

christianity!—a grand evangelical and philanthropic organization at once catholic and national—the whole church of Christ of every name united in behalf of the soldiery of every State and section, embracing in its charities, navies of hundreds of vessels, and armies of a million of men, and extending its operations along a war line of three thousand miles, and all this mighty christian machinery working voluntarily—its officers and offices and store-rooms, and the regulated freedom of 20,000 miles of railway, and 20,000 miles of telegraph, and all government vessels, and the service of more than 1,500 christian ministers and laymen, and the immense supplies distributed, freely received, freely given! Verily, here is a grand catholic and national christian development in a sphere and on a scale which is a new thing upon the earth.

Behold these christian men and women in camps, and hospitals, and battle fields, ministering, with all a brother's, a sister's, a mother's love, alike to body and soul not only of friends, but enemies—going forth to the very men who, perhaps an hour before, stood armed against themselves, their beloved ones, their country, lifting them tenderly. bearing them gently to sheltered places, wiping away their tears, their blood, binding up their wounds, assuaging their agony; receiving, in behalf of the living, their last messages of affection, and pointing their departing spirits to the great and gracious Redeemer! Yea, behold those glorious prayer-meetings! Observe those precious religious books and tracts, taking the place of the vile old literature of the camp! Hearken to those earnest gospel sermons, those resounding hymns of praise to God, superseding the old bacchanal songs of battle—and all upon fields torn with shot and shell, and in the very face of advancing squadrons! Behold, in a word, all this softening of the horrors of war, in ways and with a power, of which philanthropy never dreamed—this positive carrying of the gospel of peace, in all its celestial loveliness into the wildest tides of the battle, and then tell me if here be not truly a new development of christianity, and if that gospel which hath hitherto achieved such triumphs in scenes of blessed peace, is not now gathering trophies of more wonderful beauty and power, in the dark and deadly sphere of war's frenzied antagonisms!

And thus, and otherwise is christianity shewing itself, even now, in new forms and power in this strange field of its ministries—like an angel from heaven revealed in fairer splendor and strength, be-

cause of the wild night and devouring tempest that surround it. And when, in that surely coming hour, so longed for and besought, these great armies humanized, evangelized by this heavenly ministry, shall return from this strife—not, as of old armies came, profane, dissolute, insubordinate, to fill the land with violence, and pollute the airs of heaven with songs, ribald and blasphemous—but armies of self-governing, self-denying, God-fearing, law-abiding men, making the earth fairer with their peaceful ministries, and heaven's air pure and sweet with the breath of praise in these old songs of Zion—bearing back that old banner borne in triumph through a hundred fights, and never lowered to a foe, yet with all its unfaded, undivided, constellated stars, to be cast down in humble acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, as a glorious trophy at the foot of the cross—returning with sword and spear, not to be suspended, as blood-stained trophies of old conflict, in emblazoned halls, but to be transformed, even by the warrior's mighty hand, into implements of peaceful life—beaten into ploughshare and pruning-hook for the blessed uses of piety—then, surely then, it will appear that Christianity, which before had dwelt in spheres of peace, holding its serene way beside bright waters which no tempest stirred, did walk at last a nobler path, and win braver spoils, as it lifted a heavenly voice amid the thunders of war, and poured light as from angel wings along the black surges of battle! Surely in this respect, as well, will God's war-pruned vine bring forth more and better fruit.

But we must pause here with our illustrations. We have been considering some of the more obvious ways in which divine love seems overruling this awful conflict for our ultimate national good—some simple reasons why we are not to regard this war as God's axe at the root of our national life, but rather as God's pruning-knife among the overgrown branches, in illustration and fulfilment of that great law of husbandry:—"*Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*"

And let these simple thoughts serve to lighten our load of apprehension and deepen the cadencies of our songs of thanksgiving! Surely our grand national life is not ended; nay, it is as yet scarcely begun, and all these sharp conflicts it is enduring are only the necessary antagonisms in the development of strength for its higher walk and work! Hitherto, our young land hath been, like Jesse's youthful son, delighting, with shepherd's crook to keep

sweet pastoral holiday ; but destined too, like David, to move in loftier spheres and wield imperial influences, it must, like him, endure, in the face of the Philistine host, the stern discipline of battle !

We judge, alike from divine providences in the past, and divine prophecies of the future, that we have been raised up as a nation, as the great instrument of the world's civil and spiritual regeneration, and therefore believe that through this terrible military discipline God is fitting us for the last great conflict of liberty and christianity against the despotisms of the world. Sure we are that, if we do not perish hopelessly in the struggle, we shall come forth from it in possession of a power, and with a record of achievement which the monarchs of the world will not dare to despise. And verily it needed just this great demonstration, of our inalienable right not only, but of our inherent power of self-government—this stern wakening from long, sweet, pastoral dreams—this girding on of armor—this marshalling of countless men—this triumph of the old flag, the old patriotism, the old undivided, unparalysed, indomitable national life over an antagonism, compared with which, all foreign aggression were as nothing. It needed just this, I say, to teach a gazing and gainsaying world, that, ordained of God unto a grand philanthropic mission unto all people, ours is as well the resistless power as the fixed purpose to accomplish it in the face of, or if need be, against all the antagonisms of earth ! And when, in God's own time, chastened into purer life and storm-beaten into vaster strength by this sharp and sore discipline, with a navy imperial on the water, and an army whose measured tread shakes the land, and, floating over all upon land and sea, that old banner in its place of pride, not a star gone from its field of unstained azure, this mighty nation shall set forth afresh on its triumphal progress ; then shall we and a wondering world understand the hidden meaning of divine love in this terrible discipline, and perceive and acknowledge that God's blows are in mercy, that He chastens for profit, that "*He purgeth the vine only that it may bring forth more fruit.*"

So at least, would we fondly hope, on this day consecrated to the sweeter and fairer moods of thanksgiving. And in befitting frames would we rest here this hallowed hour, not forlorn as under the prophet's withering gourd, but exulting as under God's great vine of the centuries—thankful for the present—hopeful for the future

—rejoicing before God with "the joy of harvest." And when here in our sanctuary, as the Jew on Mount Zion, we have paid our vows to the Most High in loving consecration, then, as he returned to his distant home, filling the soft airs of Palestine with glad songs, and waking all its echoes with bounding feet, so let us go forth again to our pleasant homes—dwellings hallowed by divine goodness, by the words and ministries of love, by memorials tenderly sad, it may be, but cherished and heavenly of the beloved dead—to those firesides where children play—to those boards where kinsfolk gather, and happy voices blend—dismissing from our souls all anxious cares, driving out every reptile of discontent, every bird of evil omen from our bowers of peace, untroubled, restful, loving, joyous; for the present, thankful, because it is our own; for the future, trustful, because it is God's!

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